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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the effectiveness of a site-based teacher education program for undergraduate seniors at the University of Houston. The program's final field-based year is divided into a professional development semester and student teaching. During the professional development semester, students are placed in Professional Development Sites (PDSs) around a large metropolitan area. Each site has a multicultural mix of students from lower socioeconomic status homes. During the student teaching semester, students are placed with mentor teachers and mentored by university supervisors. Study participants were preservice teachers in their final year of teacher preparation. All had been placed in a PDS cluster, and all attended methods classes, including social studies, on elementary school campuses. University instructors modeled lessons, and student teachers gradually took over teaching duties. Preservice teachers completed the Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument, which measured perceived self-efficacy about social studies teaching, at two different times during two consecutive semesters. The program proved effective in that preservice teachers viewed themselves as able to teach exciting lessons using the latest methodology in social studies while also managing multicultural, lower socioeconomic status classrooms in many positive ways. (Contains 33 references.) (SM)

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The Effect of Site-based Preservice Experiences on Elementary Social Studies Teaching Self-Efficacy Beliefs

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It seems that the focus on education has centered upon standards in the years since Goals 2000 (National Education Goals Panel) (Nelson, 1998). Not only have national goals been highlighted but many states have rushed to develop their own twist on goals in social studies and in other subject areas. Thus, it has been easier to tie school accountability and teacher education accountability to how well students actually perform on these standards. Yet, this movement has ignored the student and the teacher in many ways. Nelson (1998) states, "Like the New Social Studies, the standards movement has all the potential for failure. Both are 'top down' endeavors that largely ignore teacher training, student knowledge, or the nature of educational change" (p. 66).

Continuing, many calls have also been made for the improvement of teacher education in general through on-site school/university partnerships and for the improvement of preservice teacher training in many subject areas as well (Bybee, 1993; National Research Council, 1996; Sivertsen, 1993). Merryfield *et al* (1997), for example, ask, "Are teacher educators preparing teachers for human diversity, cross-cultural interaction, economic inequities, and the global interconnectedness that increasingly characterize our nation's schools and communities?" (p. 1). Worries exist that, without strong and knowledgeable social studies teachers our nation will not be able to continue to lead economically, politically, and culturally in the global community. Morin recommends that, "...there is a need to restructure the sequence in which students currently enroll in methods course and field experiences to provide opportunities for students to make connections between course work and student teaching experiences. A major suggestion is to allow students to concurrently enroll in one student teaching each quarter during the last two quarters of the credential program. The course content and requirements will become more meaningful as the students utilize their knowledge and skills in these concurrent assignments" (p. 245). Within this framework, Professional Development Site (PDS) partnerships have rapidly grown during the 1990s (Teitel, 1996) due, perhaps, to a vision of their being an "exemplary learning environment that is capable of transforming both teacher preparation and the schooling of children...." (Million & Vare, p. 711). Indeed, calls for teacher education to move into Professional Development Sites have come from many directions (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Shanker, 1996; Wise & Leibbrand, 1996). National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) colleges and universities, for example, "are expected to enter into partnerships with the schools, thereby linking preparation and practice more closely than even before" (Wise & Leibbrand, 1996, p. 204). Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (1994) add their voice to the call for "clinical experiences designed to prepare prospective teachers to teach social studies in a variety of settings to a variety of students using a variety of approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment" and continue

with the conjecture that "that Schools of Education should staff faculty who excel as teachers or field supervisors" (pp. 172-173), and who should assess preservice teachers often in school settings to help them adapt to particular settings.

Part of preparing excellent preservice teachers may lie in the area of self-efficacy (Ramey-Gassert & Shroyer, 1992). For example, "Teachers' beliefs in their ability to motivate students and promote learning play a critical role in determining educational outcomes, perhaps affecting academic achievement more strongly and directly than student characteristics," note Soodak and Podell (1997, p. 214) from their research with work done by Ashton and Webb (1986) and Bandura (1993). As a follow up to Gibson and Dembro's (1984) and Ashton's (1984) work on the impact of efficacy on classroom behaviors, Enochs and Riggs (1990) developed an instrument that measured preservice teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in science.

Because self-efficacy is a situation specific construct, this study was designed and conducted as a parallel to that of Enochs and Riggs in social studies in order to help assess the effectiveness of a site-based teacher education program. The body of knowledge on the many benefits of PDSs is still small. However, by assessing in the area of self-efficacy, teacher educators can begin to determine whether this format for teacher training (PDSs) can be of greater value for future teachers of social studies.

Methods

Program Description

PUMA (Pedagogy for Urban and Multicultural Action) is the field-based teacher education program for the undergraduate senior year at this university. However, during the first two years at the university, Texas core subject areas must be fulfilled, including some social studies core courses. Normally, during the junior year students enter the college of education and begin their preprofessional development course work. Required course work for preprofessional development includes technology for teachers, a multicultural course, educational psychology, art for teachers, content area reading, and health for teachers. In addition, students may select and begin course work for a specialization within the college such as Reading Specialization, Early Childhood or Bilingual Education, or they may continue to work on a subject area specialization(s) in another college.

The final field-based year is divided into two semesters: the Professional Development Semester and Student Teaching. During the Professional Development semester, a student is placed in one of six to seven Professional Development Sites (PDSs) around a large metropolitan area. Each site is selected for its multicultural mix of students and its lower socioeconomic conditions coupled with its district's reputation for being a school that strives to meet our philosophies about teaching. These PDSs are usually a cluster of two to four schools whose preservice teachers come together each week for university courses. The selected elementary schools PDSs are normally elementary schools partnered with an intermediate and/or a junior high

school, depending on the grade level interests of those in the PDS each semester. University professors teach courses in the following areas at one of the school sites in a cluster rather than at the university: introduction to teaching, mathematics methods, language arts methods, science methods, and social studies methods. When preservice teachers are not attending classes, they are placed with a teacher in a classroom for active observation and beginning teaching experiences. This field-based commitment is four and one half days a week during this semester for elementary preservice teachers, during which time they follow a teacher's day. In addition to assignments that require individual classroom interaction with teachers and students, university instructors often schedule classroom demonstrations using PDS classrooms. Preservice teachers design and teach an interdisciplanary unit during this time as well. The culminating event is the oral presentation of a portfolio that students have created from their experiences. The audience is their school mentor, their instructors, and often their friend, family, and principal(s).

The second part of this year is the student teaching semester. During this 14-week semester preservice teachers are placed with a mentor teacher at a school and monitored by a university supervisor. They gradually take over the teaching and professional requirements of the regular classroom teacher. They may request a 14-week placement or two seven-week placements, depending on their interests and requirements for their particular subject area specialization(s). A professional portfolio is constructed for interview purposes, while the working portfolio is continued.

Participants

All participants (n=48 for the first group; n=82 for the second group) were preservice teachers in their last year of teacher preparation (semester preceding student teaching). All had been placed in one of six to seven PDS clusters described above. Participants attended methods classes (12 hours per week), including social studies, on an elementary school campus, allowing university instructors to model lessons using children at various grade levels in social studies and to have preservice teachers teach social studies lessons while university instructors observed and offered feedback. Two days per week, students were assigned to the classroom of a teacher, where they served as active aides and gradually increased their activities from helping small groups of children to teaching short social studies lessons separately and in an integrated thematic unit. Preservice students were required to prepare and participate in a number of social studies lessons using various methods and models during the semester with small peer groups and elementary students.

Limitations

During the first data collection, only data from two clusters were taken. During the second data collection, data from four clusters were taken. Two clusters' data were not collected due to excessive history threats. The university instructor for two clusters was taken ill mid-semester, and a replacement was not immediately found. These clusters were interrupted so greatly that their data

were not considered to be valid.

Procedures

Preservice teachers were given a modified Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument (STEBI-B) to measure preservice teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about social studies teaching (Enochs & Riggs, 1990). This was administered for two consecutive semesters. During the first two weeks of their semester, a 23-item survey was given to preservice teachers with levels of agreement shown from (5) "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (1) on a five-point scale. This same instrument was given as a post survey during the last week of the semester. Two constructs were measured as defined by Bandura's (1977) theory--a Social Studies Outcome Expectancy Scale (STOE) and a Personal Social Studies Teaching Efficacy Scale (PSTE).

Results/Conclusions The pretest and posttest of the STEBI-B modified for social studies were analyzed for significance in mean scores differences. Results yielded pre/post significance in the following items seen in Table 1.

Table 1. First Data (n=48) (Spring)

**Significant mean scores are reported as well as items with very high and very low percentages of agreement and disagreement.

		Pre	Post
1. When a student does better than usual in social studies, it is often because the teacher exerted a little extra effort.	Strongly agree	12.8%	59.1%
	t=4.19*.0001 Mean =	2.7	3.46
2. I will continually find better ways to teach social studies.	Strongly agree	46%	62%
3. Even if I try very hard, I will not teach social studies as well as I will most subjects.	Strongly Disagree	19%	33.3%
5. I know the steps necessary to teach social studies concepts effectively.	Strongly Agree	4.3%	32.3%
	t=5.3 *.0001 Mean =	2.26	3.2
12. I understand social studies concepts well enough to be effective in teaching elementary social studies.	Strongly Agree		
	t= 5.09 *.0001 Mean =	2.56	3.44
14. The teacher is generally responsible for achievement of students in social studies.	Strongly Agree	2.1%	22.6%
15. Student achievement in social studies is directly related to their teacher's effectiveness in SS teaching.	Strongly Agree	4.3%	22.6%
	t=2.58 Mean =	2.64	3.04

21. When a student has difficulty understanding social studies, I will usually be at a loss as to how to help the student understand it better.	Strongly Disagree t=2.65 *.01 Mean =	3.2% 2.15	3.2% 1.74
23. I do not know what to do to turn students on to social studies.	Strongly Agree t=3.18 *.002 Mean =	12.8% 2.41	38.7% 1.9

Table 2: Social Studies (Fall)

*Only item means are reported in this data.

	Means			
	Pre (n=82)	Post	t	prob.
1. When a student does better than usual in social studies, it is often because the teacher exerted a little extra effort.	4	4.06	.697	.0488
5. I know the steps necessary to teach social studies concepts effectively.	3.19	3.97	5.67	.0001
7. If students are underachieving in social studies, it is most likely due to ineffective social studies teaching.	3.06	3.48	3.02	.0003
9. The inadequacy of a student's social studies background can be overcome by good teaching.	3.95	4.135	2.08	.04
**10. The low social studies achievement of some students can generally be attributed to their teachers.	2.96	3.27	2.24	.027
12. I understand social studies concepts well enough to be effective in teaching elementary social studies.	3.53	4.10	5.12	.0001
**19. I'm sure I will have the necessary skills to teach social studies.	2.36	2.9	2.7	.0008
**23. I know what to do to turn students on to social studies.	2.72	3.2	3.3	.0001

**Some items have been reversed from negative statements for ease of reporting (*10,*19, *23).

Social Studies Scales (Second Semester of Administration)

Overall items (23) Pre/Post t-test: (Non-significant)	3.421	3.5283	1.6737	.1084
Self-Efficacy Scale	3.3209	3.5336	2.6522	.0211*

Outcome Scale (Non-significant)	3.5213	3.5512	.3296	.7492

Significant differences were found both in terms of items and of personal social studies teaching efficacy statements. In the first semester of administration, six items showed significance, though *all* items showed some positive gain. In the second administration, eight items showed significant differences in means, though, again *all* items increased in a positive direction. With both groups at least four of the significant items belonged to the Personal Self-Efficacy Scale. Outcome efficacy can be referred to as the belief in how well students can actually be taught, given limitations such as their family situation, school conditions, academic ability and so forth, while personal self-efficacy is characterized as a belief in one's own ability as a teacher to bring about positive student change and motivation (Gibson & Dembro, 1984). The Social Studies Personal Self-Efficacy Scale calculated for the second semester of administration proved significant, though the Social Studies Outcome Scale did not increase enough for significance.

Educational Implications

If new teachers believe that they can teach social studies, then they will work harder to reach students and, thus, the achievement of students will be enhanced. Therefore, the blend of theory and practice provided by the PDS schools seems to be a positive one, as numerous experiences contributed to the increase in personal teaching efficacy in the PDS. Self-efficacy, as a part of Bandura's (1977) research on the social learning theory, is the psychological construct concerned with judgments about how well one can organize and execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations. Perceived self-efficacy theory has been researched in many domains. In education, the construct of teachers' sense of efficacy has been correlated with various measures of teacher effectiveness, including classroom behaviors, attitudes, commitment and reactions to classroom problems (Ashton, Webb & Doda, 1983; Evans & Tribble, 1986; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Preservice teachers who began their semester with a belief that they could not do *that* well in teaching social studies, ended their semester with a more positive view of themselves as teachers of social studies.

In four areas identified by Bandura as sources of information used to determine self-efficacy (mastery experiences, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and positive emotional tone), *all* appeared in the PDSs. In contrast to a traditional teacher education program, the PDS model on a theoretical level enhances these four areas. For example, many opportunities for authentic performances were available (prior to student teaching) as university instructors modeled instruction with borrowed PDS classrooms, then small groups of preservice teachers went out into reserved classrooms and taught these example lessons. Preservice teachers also designed and taught social studies lessons with PDS students with the support of university instructors, often first practicing those lessons with peers within class time. The use of students for authentic performances is not

often available in university-based classrooms. In addition, all preservice teachers' lessons were carefully supported and aimed at success (rather than allowing them to be on their own enough to experience failure during the beginning steps) by those involved in the PDS experience--five university professors and a mentor teacher(s). Further, PDS sites are selected in multicultural, lower SES areas, so preservice teachers experienced early success with authentic performances with children in schools that may or may not have been similar to their own backgrounds. The progression of these authentic teaching experiences was gradual. Teaching social studies to small groups of peers led to teaching an entire class of peers. Then, teaching a PDS classroom together with a group of peers led to teaching social studies all alone. Thus, small supported steps were taken towards self-efficacy in each subject area. Preservice teachers were able to view themselves as successfully able to teach exciting lessons using the latest methodology in social studies (while also managing a multicultural, lower SES classroom in a variety of positive ways)--because they had done it!

Vicarious experiences, (the observation of others succeeding or failing) also an essential part of obtaining self-efficacy for Bandura, was provided by seeing university instructors and classroom teachers interact with PDS students in their assigned activities--often in a directed observation with required reflection. These observations began to help preservice teachers expand their vision/identity of themselves as "social studies teachers" throughout the semester. In addition to the social studies methods class, preservice teachers watched each other often as they taught social studies individually and as a small group. Expectations for teaching an integrated unit required that each member of the class do a peer coaching, an observational instrument scoring, and a video taping for a peer. This enhances research done by Schunk (1996) who notes that observation of *similar* models affects self-efficacy with the idea of, "Well, if they can do it, so can I!"

Verbal or social persuasion (encouragement from others) was also a strong component of being in a PDS. The relationship established with the mentor teacher was one that provided a great deal of verbal support. Preservice teachers were encouraged to work with students in small groups until they were ready to take over teaching a unit in which language arts, social studies, mathematics, and/or science was a required element. University subject area instructors, instructors in induction into teaching, and mentor teachers provided written and oral verbal feedback in evaluating lesson designs and performance with PDS children. Another related area of self-efficacy researched by Graham and Weiner (1996) states that self-efficacy increases when students receive rewards based on *performance*, as performance rewards signal increasing competence. Preservice teachers in PDSs received feedback during the entire semester in various performance situations. Again, this was verbal, as well as performance rating sheets. Another essential area provided by a PDS was support provided by a peer cohort assigned to one PDS--all classes were taken together and much positive socialization and encouragement occurred during the course of the semester. Again, preservice teachers were asked during the semester to observe each other, rate each other, and debrief using a performance scale in addition to peer coaching. These were always very verbally supportive. Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) stress, however, that efficacy grows from *real* success with

students rather than *only* the "moral support or cheerleading of professors and colleagues" (Woolfolk, p. 394), and advises education students that any experience or training that helps success in the day-to-day task of teaching will provide a foundation for developing a sense of efficacy in a career. The PDS experience provided opportunities early on not only for "cheerleading" but also for actual success for preservice teachers in the social studies workplace with five university professors, a mentor teacher, and a supportive school.

Psychological states (positive emotional tones) were also noted in the PDS site. Because many preservice teachers viewed these PDS experiences as the beginning of a career rather than another set of courses, there were higher expectations and increased psychological states. Many of these preservice teachers knew that recommendations from their PDS school would enhance their chances of quick job offers and many want to stay in their site for student teaching. During the semester the emphasis on cooperation of all cohort members was stressed. Yet another part of the positive PDS experience was reflective in nature. Messages emphasized in reflective discussion, for example, read:

> Failure? No, just another opportunity to learn for the next time.
>
> Every lesson should be (for the teacher) an inquiry or a quiet form of research.
>
> By regarding an 'imperfection' in the student NOT as a defect in the pupil but as a missing part in one's own abilities *at the moment*, we can concentrate on discovering the answers to fill those gaps.

This direction supports Covington (1992) and Covington and Omelick's (1984, 1987) work on mastery-oriented students who have high self-efficacy. They are not fearful of failure because it does not threaten self-worth. Instead, the PDS offered a chance to take risks, seek feedback, and gain more skill.

The more positive conclusions found in this study suggest success for PDSs as training centers for teachers-to-be of social studies. Future studies are needed to follow the long-term effects, especially concerning classroom behaviors on participants as they continue in their careers in teaching social studies, and perhaps ways to improve Outcome Expectancy beliefs. Some researchers have found that a high sense of self-efficacy declines in the first years of teaching. However, our evidence seems to point to a positive trend in having preservice self-efficacy beliefs impact the teaching of social studies. Through Bandura's (1993) and Zimmerman's research (1995) we know that if self-efficacy is high, higher goals will be set, there will be less fear of failure, and longer persistence rates. Also, according to Gibson and Dembro (1984), teachers will devote more time to academic instruction and take great responsibly for students who have difficulty in learning (Gibson & Dembro, 1984; Soodak & Podell, 1993). We believe that PDS preservice teachers who enter teaching with a higher self-efficacy will, thus, begin their careers as more exemplary teachers in these subject areas and be more apt to stay in the teaching profession.

Flammer (1995) also comments that those who have high self-efficacy are more motivated to achieve and tend to be more healthy mentally and physically. Bandura (1993) and Zimmerman (1995) add that when self-efficacy is low, a person is likely to give up easily or avoid tasks altogether. Again, this would be important in the study of persistence and retention of teachers. More research would be needed to determine if retention is affected, but Woolfolk maintains that, "Self-efficacy theory predicts that teachers with a high sense of efficacy work harder and persist longer, even when students are difficult to teach in part because these teachers believe in themselves and in their students (p. 393). The collaborative efforts between real schools and colleges of education in establishing PDS sites seems to be, at this point, a positive move in developing self-efficacy in teaching social studies and enhancing preservice teacher education.

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